

August 2, 2006

Mr. Daniel Ravenel
Executive Director Search Committee Chair
33 Broad St., Charleston, SC 29401

Dear Mr. Ravenel:

A colleague has told me that the position of Executive Director of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education is open and has encouraged me to apply. I have reviewed the materials provided in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and agree that this is an extraordinarily attractive opportunity.

South Carolina has an excellent system of higher education, an attractive physical and cultural environment, and the clear potential to be a national leader in economic growth and quality of life. I have followed developments in the state reasonably closely over the last four years, and believe that I could contribute in a significant way toward solving the current array of challenges.

The purpose of this letter is to provide a very brief summary of my experience and qualifications. For a more complete reference, a *curriculum vitae* is attached.

As you will see from my *resumé*, I have long experience in higher education, beginning with roles at a large university that covered the department, college, and central office levels. For the past twenty years as Vice Chancellor and currently as Interim Chancellor, I have had the opportunity to complement this experience with a variety of assignments at the state level.

As Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, I work closely with presidents, provosts, two-year chief academic officers, vice presidents for research, deans of arts and sciences, deans of graduate and professional colleges, chief information officers, and many others at both public universities and community and technical colleges. The Regents in Ohio also have extensive oversight of independent institutions, and I regularly interact with senior representatives of these institutions as well. These experiences, which encompass issues ranging from budget to academic programs to student and public affairs, have given me the ability to understand the full range of issues in higher education.

Much of my responsibility as Vice Chancellor has been in connection with state government and with the business community. I regularly meet with and work with legislators and testify before various committees of both the House and the Senate. This role has given me an appreciation of the complex strategies needed to communicate with legislators and their staff—individuals whose attention is fragmented by the simultaneous appeal of numerous powerful constituencies. At the same time, I interact

on a regular basis with members of the Governor's staff and with other state agencies, particularly the Department of Development.

Because a major part of my responsibility includes economic development, I have had direct involvement for some fifteen years with the business community. In addition to serving jointly with the CEOs of major corporations on many state level panels, such as the Science and Technology Council, I have had extensive contact with leaders of smaller businesses and have engaged organizations such as the Business Roundtable in many of the Regents core projects.

A pleasant part of my role as Vice Chancellor (at least usually) has been the opportunity to be a regular visitor with the editorial boards of the state's major newspapers. Learning to appreciate the media's need for concise, focused descriptions of policy issues has been an invaluable lesson for someone whose academic training permitted lengthier descriptions.

Leadership is obviously an important criterion in seeking an Executive Director, and I appreciate the need to respond directly with specific examples from my resume. However, there is an important caveat that I must emphasize in doing this- success in today's complex environment requires that problems be approached with teams. Thus, none of the examples that I cite below are even close to being my achievement alone. Rather, they describe efforts where I was, or continue to be, the team leader.

Some historical examples of leadership-

- OHIOLINK

Ohio has the world's best library and information system. I was responsible for leading the team that: designed the structure and function of the system; defined what was then a revolutionary technical architecture; selected hardware and software vendors; developed a budget structure; and built a level of support sufficient to fund a new program in what was at that time the state's worst budget crisis in history. At this point, leadership was transferred to a new Governing Board and an Executive Director; most of the credit for the system's success belongs to them.

- ACCESS POLICY

As Vice Chancellor for academic and access programs, I led a comprehensive reassessment of Regents policies on access to higher education in 1998-99. The result, which emphasized four dimensions of access—aspiration, academic preparation, affordability, and access of time and place—remains the foundation of Regents' policy today and led to application for and award of a major federal GearUP grant.

- ARTICULATION AND TRANSFER

I led the initial development of Ohio's well-regarded statewide articulation and transfer policy. A colleague has done a superb job of advancing the system to the point where it is one of the most advanced in the nation.

- STATEWIDE DOCTORAL REVIEW

As a result of budget cuts in the early 1990s, Ohio undertook a structural analysis of higher education. A part of this was a review of doctoral education to see if there was "unnecessary duplication." Unlike South Carolina, Ohio has a large number of doctoral institutions, and the review that I led necessarily resulted in the elimination of state funding for many programs and required restructuring for many others. Looking back, we believe that the review sharply improved not only the efficiency but

also the effectiveness of our investment in doctoral education and that it also had important corollary benefits to undergraduate education.

- DISCOVERY/ MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE EDUCATION

When the National Science Foundation announced its statewide systemic change grants in 1990, I put together a team that developed what was then a radical approach to improving math/ science education at the K-12 level. Ohio was a winner in the first round of the competition, and the state has continued funding for Project Discovery in the years since. A colleague has taken over leadership of the effort, and his work has shown that the Discovery strategy is highly successful in improving student performance. He has implemented a number of mechanisms for scaling up activities in order to make the program's impact more widespread.

- NO HIGHER RESPONSIBILITY/ TEACHER EDUCATION

Beginning in 1999, I led an effort that includes three major research universities in agreeing that there is no higher responsibility than preparing the next generation of teachers. Again under the subsequent leadership of a colleague, this work has resulted in substantial change at participating campuses, and we expect the initiative will extend to others in the near future.

Some current examples of leadership-

- THE OHIO PLAN/ THE THIRD FRONTIER PROGRAM

Having concluded that the time was ripe for a major initiative in connecting university research to commercialization in the state, in the spring of 2000 I put together a team that produced The Ohio Plan, a six-year \$900 million initiative. The Regents and the Governor supported it, and legislative leaders tell us that they would have as well were it not for the budget meltdown of 2001. The Governor has since revived the plan as the Third Frontier Program (employing almost entirely bond money instead of operating funds) in a ten-year project with projected expenditures of \$1.6 billion. I serve on the project planning team with staff of the Department of Development and Governor's office.

- KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY AWARENESS INITIATIVE

Although our communications strategies have been highly successful with statewide opinion leaders, we have not gained the overall shift in public opinion that we will need if Ohio is to modernize its economy. Consequently, I developed a strategy, called the Knowledge Economy Awareness Initiative (nicknamed the "Full State Press"), that aims first to deliver basic information about the knowledge economy to community leaders ("grass tops"), and subsequently to motivate them to become involved in change. The effort has garnered widespread support, and has resulted in some 250 presentations to circa 7,000 community leaders. We have also scheduled or completed about a dozen regional forums on higher education and the economy. The process will continue and evolve.

- THIRD FRONTIER NETWORK

The Ohio Plan envisaged an unprecedented approach to inter-university collaboration, employing a state of the art network to allow researchers at multiple institutions to work together as if they were on the same campus. In order to accomplish this, I established a statewide team to create the network. After one false start with a new vendor who failed to receive startup financing, we have completed the purchase of a ~1,600 mile statewide backbone of previously dark fiber optic cable and lit the network with dense wave division multiplexing. Competition is fierce, particularly from California, but Ohio at the moment has the most advanced network in the nation. The Governor has incorporated the network into the Third Frontier Program, and I led a group that has to date secured federal funding in the amount of

\$7.35 million to enhance the implementation with monies for medical education (including patient care, education, and research), shared scientific instrumentation, and science education. A side benefit of this is that the Regents are now well known both to the Ohio delegation and to the major federal agencies.

○ COMPUTATIONAL RESOURCES FOR BUSINESS

A group I started and am leading is working on an initiative to put Ohio's medium and small businesses ahead of the curve by providing them with computational resources and tools for simulation and modeling of products and processes,. An interesting part of the idea is a "computational co-op" for undergraduate and graduate students.

○ ACCOUNTABILITY/ GENERAL EDUCATION.

Together with a colleague, I have led a statewide consultation on assessment in higher education, particularly for general education. After about a year of work, the colleges and universities (public and private) have agreed to implement Student Success Plans that will attend to the public's legitimate interest in accountability while both respecting the value of different institutional strategies and assuring that the goal is improvement, not just measurement.

I hope that this brief description of some of my activities will provide evidence of an appropriate background for the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education. I have always believed that a coordinating board can be very effective—as catalyst, investigator, motivator, resource—in a manner that fully respects the local management of colleges and universities as well as the responsibility of their boards of trustees. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Garrison Walters
Interim Chancellor and
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and
Economic Advancement